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AUTHOR	Accomando, Kathleen; And Others
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ABSTRACT

A program for improving the quality of student writing was developed. The targeted population consists of kindergarten, first- and second-grade students in an expanding middle class community, located in a suburb southwest of Chicago. The problem is documented through data collected from writing samples, anecdotal checklists, student interviews, and student reflections. Analysis of probable cause data indicated that students who have difficulties with writing frequently experience a lack of ownership or purpose and often fail to recognize the relevance of writing in their lives. Reviews of professional literature also pointed to inadequate time allotted to writing, failure to directly instruct writing strategies, and an insistence by many teachers that writing be accomplished in a silent, non-interactive environment. A review of solution strategies suggested by professional researchers, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the formation of three major intervention strategies: (1) specific experiences will be provided to improve students' view of writing as a desirable form of communication; (2) frameworks will be devised to organize the classroom environment and instructional time into regularly scheduled opportunities to directly instruct and guide the writing process; and (3) a classroom climate will be created which will encourage social interaction as an integral part of the writing process. (The eight appendixes include a student writing interview, a sample lesson plan, writing rubrics, and a glossary. Contains 27 references.) (Author/TB)

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING:
A SOCIAL EXPERIENCE AMONG PRIMARY STUDENTS

by

*Kathleen Accomando
*Linda Gall
*Judith Jamrisko
*Janice Lindeman

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight
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Action Research Project
Site: Tinley Park, Illinois
Submitted: May, 1996

*Teachers
Fulton School
Tinley Park, Illinois

Dedicated to
our loving families
in appreciation for their
encouragement, support and patience.
We're coming home!

SIGNATURE PAGE

This project was approved by

Holly D. Mackley
Advisor

Elaine M. Stiffler
Advisor

Terry Stirling
Dean, School of Education

Abstract

Authors: Kathleen Accomando
Linda Gall
Judith Jamrisko
Janice Lindeman

Site: Tinley Park I

Date: May, 1996

Title: The Development of Writing: A Social Experience Among Primary Students

This report describes a program for improving the quality of student writing. The targeted population will consist of kindergarten, first and second grade students in an expanding middle class community, located in a suburb southwest of Chicago. The problem will be documented through data collected from writing samples, anecdotal checklists, student interviews, and student reflections.

Analysis of probable cause data indicated that students who have difficulties with writing frequently experience a lack of ownership or purpose and often fail to recognize the relevance of writing in their lives. Reviews of professional literature also point to inadequate time allotted to writing, failure to directly instruct writing strategies, and an insistence by many teachers that writing be accomplished in a silent, non-interactive environment.

A review of solution strategies suggested by professional researchers, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, has resulted in the formation of three major intervention strategies: specific experiences will be provided to improve the students' view of writing as a desirable form of communication; frameworks will be devised to organize the classroom environment and instructional time into regularly scheduled opportunities to directly instruct and guide the writing process; and a classroom climate will be created which will encourage social interaction as an integral part of the writing process.

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Chapter 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of Problem

The students of the targeted kindergarten through 2nd-grade classes do not consistently demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively in writing. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes anecdotal records of student writing, and assessments of student writing based on a team-developed rubric of writing.

Immediate Problem Context

The school is located in a suburb of a large urban center in the mid-west and consists of students in kindergarten through second grade. The school also houses programs for early childhood and pre-kindergarten students with a total student population ranging from 300 to 320. Students are from predominantly White, non-Hispanic, middle-class families. The balance of the population consists of 2.6 % Black, non-Hispanic, 4.8 % Hispanic, 0.6 % Asian-Pacific Islander and 0.0 % Native American. Of the enrollment, 9.6 % fall into the low income bracket. Students participate in the free lunch program based on need, and the 1993 rate was 12.2 %. The rate of attendance was 94.5 % with a chronic truancy rate of 0.0 %. A school wide mobility rate of 10.8 % was reported in 1993; however, this percentage has fluctuated between 10 % and 16 % over the last five years (State School Report Card, 1994).

The total school staff numbers 53 which includes 13 regular elementary teachers, all of whom hold Bachelor degrees in Education. Four teachers will be receiving their Masters degrees by May of 1996. Teaching experience among this

group averages 13 years. The regular education staff consists of: two kindergarten teachers, five 1st-grade teachers, four 2nd-grade teachers, one music teacher, and one physical education teacher. The nine members of the support staff that impact our targeted population include: two learning disability/behavior disorder teachers, one social worker, one speech/language therapist, one multi-needs facilitator, one English as a second language (ESL) teacher, two Chapter I math/reading teachers, and one librarian. There are 12 additional staff members who service children enrolled in the pre-kindergarten and early childhood classrooms. Other support is provided to various groups of students by 14 aides throughout the building.

The facility is maintained by two full-time custodians. A full-time health clerk, who is also a registered nurse, attends to the physical needs of the students. The school is administrated by a full-time principal, with the assistance of a school secretary.

Situated in a residential area and built in 1951, the school is a single level, brick building that includes a combination gymnasium/lunchroom, a computer room, and a learning center. It also includes 15 classrooms, a music room and office space for the building administration. Adjacent to the building is a playground, parking lot and two blacktop areas. However, in early September, the construction of a new administration center building severely curtailed the use of these areas during the course of the research. A park district forest preserve borders the eastern edge of the school grounds.

Class sizes in kindergarten, first grade and second grade currently average 24, 20 and 22 respectively.

Students, in conjunction with a school philosophy that promotes the unique importance of each individual, have the opportunity to participate in many programs. Every child receives instruction in the broad areas of language arts, mathematics, biological and physical sciences, social studies and fine arts, while also being exposed to enriching cultural arts assemblies (PTA sponsored) and educational field trips.

Children have a regular weekly library time, during which they are instructed in the areas of library sciences and research while also having the opportunity to explore and check out books. The Learning Center director manages a "Book Buddy" reading program during the month of May which utilizes a reward system to encourage students to read a variety of books.

A computer lab containing 24 computers is available to all classes. Software is provided through the district network and has, in the past, included many types of reading, writing and mathematics programs. However, because the system is currently in the process of being upgraded, access to student programs will be limited this year.

As an important corollary to the basic school philosophy, affective education areas are addressed through daily music and physical education classes. The school also uses a program entitled "Discover" to teach students the concepts of personal safety, decision making strategies and personal responsibility.

Curriculum is presented using a whole language model. Definitions of whole language vary; whole language instruction in the school encompasses a large number of methods and strategies. These revolve around the basic tenet that language, whether written or read, must have meaning and relevance to be used

and understood. Whole language teachers avoid teaching isolated skills, believing that functional literacy develops naturally, from whole to part, not the reverse.

Reading and writing are organized around content-related themes, a strategy that helps readers and writers to construct meaning for themselves. With comprehension of meaning being the ultimate goal, materials for reading instruction usually feature quality children's literature, rather than vocabulary controlled basals. Writing assignments are related to the curriculum theme in order to help fully integrate all subject/skill areas. In addition, the school uses the Mimosa Mathematics program which develops problem-solving skills in a language based format.

As a result of the district's continuing participation in the Education 2000 project, many teachers are developing more authentic means of assessing their students' progress. Examples would include portfolio assessments and those based on projects/performances. These assessments are often embedded within the curriculum; a curriculum which emphasizes hands-on, developmentally appropriate activities.

Other programs exist to provide service to specific groups of students. Academically talented students, who have demonstrated 90 % mastery of a particular curriculum area, can devote time to individual research and projects through the Opportunities and Resources for Enrichment (O.R.E.) model. Students meeting screening criteria are supported in the areas of reading and mathematics through the federally funded Chapter I program. Children of non-English backgrounds who possess a limited proficiency in English work with certified English as a second language (ESL) professionals, while children having

articulation or language delays/deficits are supported by speech/language therapists. Children identified as learning disabled, behavior disordered or multi-need are also supplied with numerous support systems as prescribed by law. In all of the above cases services are provided within the classroom, if possible, by a transdisciplinary team consisting of the classroom teacher and any support staff involved with the identified student. Pull-out is to be minimized and due to the full inclusion district policy in force, self-contained classrooms of disabled children no longer exist. However, there is an Instructional Program (in class) for those children needing help more than 50 % of their day.

The Surrounding Community

The school district serves 2,463 students within six schools including one primary, four elementary and one middle school. These schools feed into three high schools. The 1992-93 operating expenditure per student was $4,897. Nearly 80 % of these costs were funded at the district level. The district's low income enrollment was 5.0 % with a limited English-proficient enrollment of 2.2 % .

The total number of administrators in the district was twelve. They had a 93-94 average salary of $69,728. The student-administrator ratio was 223.9 to 1 and the teacher-administrator ratio was 12.6 to 1.

The district employs 152 teachers of which 12.5 % are male and 87.5 % are female. The 1993-94 average teacher salary was $37,484 and the average years of experience was 14.7. The percent of teachers having a bachelor's degree was 62.5 with the remaining 37.5 holding master's degrees or beyond. The student-teacher ratio was 19 to 1 (State School Report Card, 1994).

This community, founded in 1850, is a southwestern suburb of Chicago. It began as a farming community, populated predominantly by German settlers. The expansion of the railroad in 1852 encouraged the village's rapid development into a center of commerce.

According to the 1990 Census, the population of the village totals 37,150. This consists of 18,065 males and 19,056 females with a median age of 31.8. Over 90 % of the population is white. The remaining population is made up of approximately 1 % black, less than 1 % Aleut, approximately 1 % Asian or Pacific Islander, and 2 % of Hispanic origin.

The total number of households within district boundaries was 12,551 with median family incomes of $43,198. Of these, 9,662 are family households with median family incomes of $22,116. Poverty status was determined for 35,934 persons. Of these, 881 were reported as below the poverty level.

High school graduates over the age of 25 comprise 82 % of the population. Those having obtained bachelor's degrees or higher total 18 %. The occupational breakdown of the labor force is as follows: 53 % skilled workers, general laborers and service personnel, 34 % technicians and salespersons and 26 % are in managerial/professional positions. Seventy-nine percent of women with school-age children are in the labor force. Sixty-seven percent of school-age children have all significant adults working.

The school district and community have formed a cooperative partnership over the years. In 1988 the community members passed a referendum to provide additional funding to support the school system. More recently, the district has begun to look at restructuring through the Education 2000 project. To date, work

has been done on composing a mission statement, writing standards and outcomes and setting benchmarks. Implementation of the first strand of the new curriculum was begun during the 1994-95 school year. Throughout the restructuring process the district has kept the community well-informed of its work through coffees, public forums and newsletters. The district has actively sought input on Education 2000 projects and committees from parents, business people and community members at large. Education 2000 is an ongoing process designed to build cohesiveness between the school district and the community it serves.

Regional and National Context

In recent years, the issue of literacy has been highly debated in the public forum throughout the United States. Literacy is defined as the ability to actively use the processes of listening, speaking, reading and writing to successfully construct and communicate meaning. According to Heller (1990), "Literacy is viewed primarily as a tool which provides access to the mainstream workforce; a tool which enables American citizens to contribute to the American ideal of economic and scientific superiority" (p. 416). It is no wonder then that Americans react with alarm when they hear the statistic that one-third of the adults in the United States are illiterate (Criscuolo, 1988).

Gilstrap (1989) reports that research shows illiteracy is not a selective affliction but rather one of equal opportunity. In support of this statement Westreich (cited in Gilstrap, 1989) claims "Illiteracy has no racial, geographic or economic boundaries or prejudices. It is a disease that has reached epidemic proportions and it extracts a great emotional toll on its victims..." (p. 23). Barbara Bush, former first lady, is a dedicated crusader against illiteracy. Mrs. Bush (cited

in Gilstrap, 1989, p. 22) points out that "There is a direct correlation between crime and illiteracy, between illiteracy and unemployment" (p. 22). The United States Department of Education also reports that while functionally illiterate adults account for 36 % of the chronically unemployed, they also account for 59 % of those in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs (Gilstrap, 1989). Illiteracy has grown to such a degree that many educational experts call it "America's hidden problem" (Criscuolo, 1988).

Even some of those in the educational field are not left unscathed. As an employer of school personnel, David Work, a principal, has observed the wide range of writing ability among those considered to be well educated. He has noted that on written applications some people are very articulate and clear, while others do a very poor job and cannot express themselves in writing. He attributes this, in part, to the lack of ability to formulate an answer for a specific question, and partly to the inability to articulate an answer in a clear and concise manner (D. Work, Personal Communication, April 14, 1995).

Atwell (1989) states that none of her colleagues (some of whom had masters degrees plus 40 hours) had attended a course or workshop on how to teach writing. This is typical of both undergraduate and graduate training, considering the results of an informal survey taken of 36 universities. The results of this survey showed an offering of 169 reading courses and only two writing courses. Atwell feels that teachers need more information about teaching writing. This becomes more evident when examining student achievement in the area of writing.

In 1986, the National Assessment of Educational Progress reported that only 12 % of eighth graders and 19.4 % of eleventh graders could write a

> convincing letter to a prospective summer employer, only 18 % of both the eighth and eleventh graders could do an "adequate" job of imaginative writing that did not rely upon a given story framework, and, in general, American students could not express themselves well enough to ensure that their writing will accomplish the intended purpose (p. 14).

Although some have been led to believe writing is not as necessary in this new age of mass communication, the National Council of Teachers of English (cited in Petty, Petty, & Becking, 1981) proclaims it remains a vital medium for self-expression, communication, and the construction of meaning. Furthermore, they propose there is an increasing, not decreasing, need for effective writing skills. The challenge to educators is to research and design writing instruction that meets this need.

Petty, et al. (1981) suggest that a writing program will only be truly effective when the total language arts program is meaningful, challenging, and enjoyable. Story writing begins with oral sharing; to children, a story is something they want to tell. Early writings are usually about something they have experienced. When encouraged to do so, children will use their natural curiosity and imagination to further develop their stories. This is the result of divergent thinking; a matter of exploring a variety of feelings and ideas beyond their own experiences. However, the process of committing these thoughts to paper requires some degree of convergent thinking; the ability to organize and synthesize many thoughts into a single storyline. Children recognize that good stories have an interesting beginning, sequential development, and a point or climax. Yet, when they begin to write, their stories have an interesting beginning; however, the sequence of events

becomes confusing and a climax is often lacking. Finally, the story abruptly stops, often with the triumphant words "The End." Therefore, one task of educators is to foster the habit of good writing, a habit which includes organizing and supporting ideas and choosing the most appropriate words and voice to express an idea. Writing then becomes "virtually indistinguishable from clear thinking" (California Department of Education, 1987, p. V).

In conclusion, a compelling challenge to those concerned with the issue of illiteracy in our nation has been put forth by Gilstrap (1989).

> Illiteracy in the workplace--it's an enormous American problem, a national emergency. It has reached crisis proportions and is a serious governmental, economic and educational issue. The loss in human potential is enormous. But this situation is rendered even more tragic by the fact that illiteracy is a fundamentally solvable problem--one that can be overcome with a combination of public awareness, increased funding for new and existing literacy programs and better planning. One of the most curable ills in America today is adult illiteracy (p.21).

Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSES

Problem Evidence

As documented by Hicks (1993), teaching children to write compositions has been a goal of the American school system since colonial times. In recent years there has been an increase in the awareness of the need for writing, leading to a higher priority placed on writing. This should have resulted in steadily improving writing skills of our children, yet this has not generally been the case. "Writing programs have had mixed results, often less than desired" (p.7).

A ten-year study of the writing skills of 95,000 children was released in 1984 by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. It reported that "Sixty-two percent of the 17-year-olds, 81% of the 13-year-olds, and 97 % of the nine-year-olds wrote unsatisfactory informative prose." Similarly disturbing results were reported for imaginative material and even more alarming results for persuasive works (Hicks, 1993, pgs. 7-8).

A more recent study from NAEP (as cited in Hicks, 1993) substantiates the earlier study's conclusion that there was a definite reason for concern about the writing competency of the nation's students. This concern is shared by Hicks and other experienced teachers who have observed poor, and often deteriorating, writing skills in their classrooms.

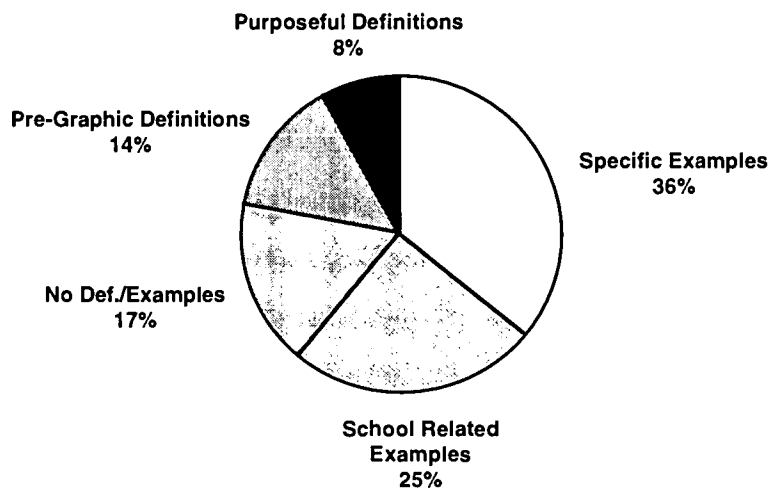
In order to document the extent to which these concerns exist in the targeted kindergarten through 2nd-grade classrooms, the teacher-researchers conducted student interviews focusing on each individual's understanding of the purpose of writing and attitudes connected to writing. Additionally, writing samples scored on a team-devised rubric for content and mechanics were collected. Accompanying these were anecdotal records and checklists of students observed

during the writing sample activity. Finally, logs were maintained by teacher-researchers for the dual purposes of documentation and reflection.

Within the first two weeks of school, student interviews were conducted individually, with the teacher-researchers recording responses. The interview (see Appendix A) consisted of eight questions which focused on two areas of writing development. Questions one through three garnered information on the students' ability to define writing and its purpose. Questions four through eight prompted responses regarding the students' view of themselves as writers. There were no pre-determined categories for classifying student responses within these two areas; instead, the responses were examined to find similarities which were used to delineate categories. Figure 1 illustrates this breakdown of categories and their respective percentages.

Figure 1

Student Interview Questions One Through Three



Of the 59 students interviewed, 17 % could neither define nor give examples of writing. Common responses were shrugs, confused looks, and statements such as "I don't know" or "To write." The responses of 14 % of the

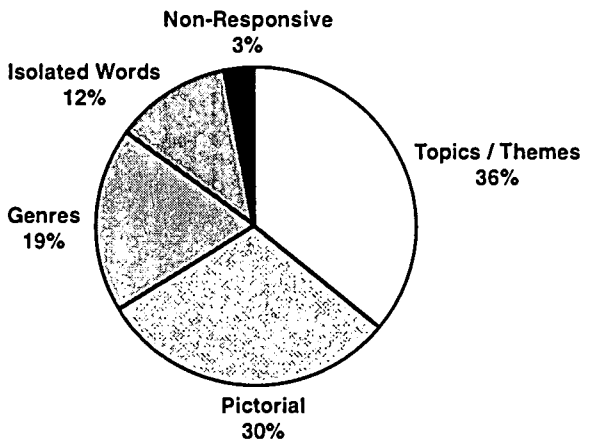
students indicated a pre-graphic definition related to drawing. Sample statements in this category were similar to those of Matt, a kindergarten child. When asked "What is writing?" Matt answered, "Write a person; give him a head, eyes, nose, and ears." Twenty-five percent of the respondents could not define writing but were able to relate it in generic terms to school. Examples of responses in this category were "Like your mom tells you to write something for school", "For to get better at writing; to learn how to write words" and "You write stuff...homework...write numbers and stuff." An additional 36 % were also unable to define writing; however, they were able to give specific examples beyond the school setting. Responses typical of this category were "Writing people a note or something", "My mom writes for me for my homework, but my dad writes because he works for the office" and "(Mom) writes checks". The final category reflected an emerging, purposeful definition of writing. Responses of 8 % of the students fell into this category and included answers such as "Something that you write about...to tell people stuff", "It's like doing letters and making words to send to people...to give messages to other people", and "Putting letters together and making words...so they can tell each other how they feel and stuff".

The second section of the interview, questions four through eight, focused on the students' perception of themselves as writers. As depicted in Figure 2 on the following page, 3 % of the students were non-responsive. Thirty percent described writing in pictorial terms. Examples would include "I write my family on the beach...because I draw a lot of things good", "I write pictures and stuff", "I'm starting to write a book. It's a birthday and the pictures...I don't know the pictures I'm gonna write, because I'm gonna use crayons". Twelve percent viewed writing as isolated words, as illustrated by the example given by Ryan, a 1st-grade child. When asked, "What kind of things do you write?", he replied, "Anything that I know to write...like 'the'". Thirty-six percent of the sample

thought of writing in terms of topics or themes. Many in this group when asked, "What would you like to be able to write?" responded with answers that referred to holidays, such as Halloween or Christmas or specific topics like animals or insects. The final category, 19 % of the targeted population, perceived writing as a variety of different genres. Nicholas, a 1st-grade child, said that he wrote things like "phone numbers or letters...like post office letters". Other children cited genres that included writing notes to friends and writing in different languages for a variety of purposes.

Figure 2

Student Interview Questions Four Through Eight



Following the completion of student interviews, the first of two writing samples were collected. The first writing samples were on unit-related, teacher-assigned topics. Topics varied among the classrooms, but presentation of the task and the available materials remained the same. (See Appendix B). Social interaction was neither encouraged nor discouraged. The teacher-researchers refrained from assisting individuals or commenting on work. During this time, the teacher-researchers observed social interactions and individual approaches to the

task and recorded their observations in anecdotal notes and on checklists. (See Appendixes C and D).

The resulting samples were collaboratively scored by the teacher-researchers utilizing the team-devised rubric. It became clear at this time that the rubric needed to be refined, particularly in the area of criteria for pictorial writing. Writing samples were then rescored on the revised rubric within the two broad areas of pictorial and graphic writing (See Appendix E).

The process used to determine categories in the student interviews was adapted when evaluating the written samples. Similarities occurring naturally in the students' writing formed the basis of the revision of the breakdown of categories. The teacher-researchers recognized the number of categories could be cumbersome but concluded that it best represented the diverse range of work produced in the kindergarten through 2nd-grade classrooms. By combining closely-linked categories, a secondary clustering was established. These categories were primarily devised based on content criteria rather than mechanics, as the mechanics did not significantly alter these delineations.

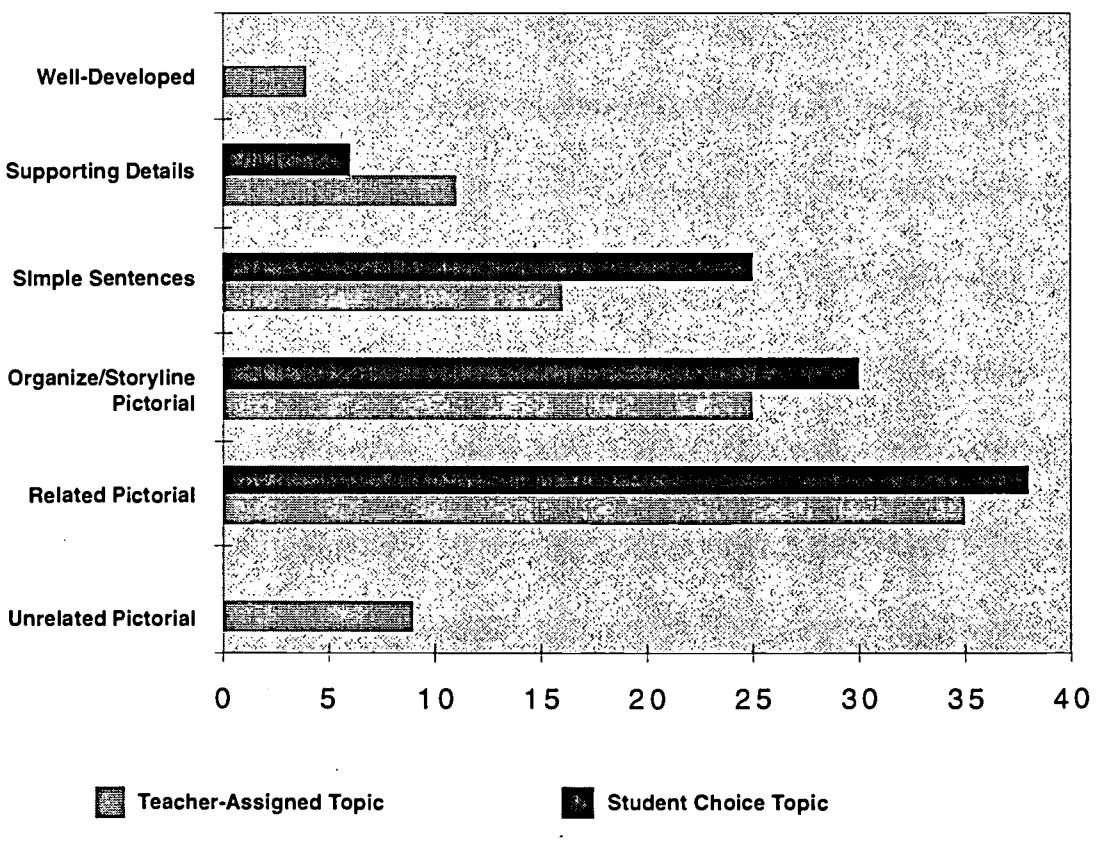
Fifty-six of the 59 students participated in the writing sample. One student with physical and cognitive impairments is fully included in the classroom but was unable to participate due to limitations. Two additional students were absent. Nine percent of those participating in the sample produced a pictorial piece unrelated to the assigned topic. Thirty-five percent produced pictures which related to the assigned topic, some of which prompted additional information when given the opportunity for dictation. Twenty-five percent of the writers used pictures to organize information or attempt a storyline; this category represents a transitionary stage to graphic writing as some use of labeling was evident. Sixteen percent wrote simple sentences which related to the topic the majority of the time, although some added irrelevant information. Eleven percent also wrote simple

sentences but supported main ideas with details. The remaining 4 % had well-developed pieces including more complex sentences and supporting details.

Approximately one week later the second writing samples were collected. The method of presentation remained consistent with that of the first writing sample with the exception of the topic, i.e., no specific topics were assigned or suggested by the teacher. These samples were scored and reported in the same manner as the first writing sample. Figure 3 shows the results from both writing samples in the clustered writing categories.

Figure 3

Student Writing Samples



Due to the fact that the topics were self-selected, 0 % of students fell into the category of "Unrelated to Topic." Thirty-eight percent of the students

produced a pictorial piece related to their chosen topic or used their picture to prompt additional information through dictation. Thirty percent organized information or attempted a storyline with pictures. Twenty-five percent of the graphic writers wrote simple sentences primarily related to the topic, although some added irrelevant details. Six percent wrote simple sentences while supporting main ideas with details; additionally, almost all had stronger beginnings than endings. There were no samples scored as "Well-developed."

Anecdotal records of the teacher-researchers indicated that many children freely conversed about their topics and plans while some talked about topics or experiences that were prompted by the work of their peers. Still others worked quietly with little verbal interaction although they appeared to show interest in the conversations around them.

The first kindergarten writing sample was on a teacher-assigned topic. Social interaction was limited, and the talk appeared to be for clarification of the task. For example, comments recorded by the teacher included such statements as "Is this right?", "Can I do anything I want?", and "Can I make it any color?". Students directed their conversations towards other students and towards the teacher. There was some copying as evidenced by a high number of similar drawings.

In the second kindergarten sample, students were allowed to choose their topic and there was even less social interaction. Students appeared more confident regarding the task, were more independent and worked for a longer period of time. As students finished their work the conversation levels increased as they spontaneously shared what they had done.

There was a wide range of interaction within the 1st-grade classroom during both writing samples. Several children worked quietly, with little verbal interaction; however, they were visually attentive to what others were doing. In

contrast, some children talked frequently about events that appeared to the teacher to be unrelated to the topic, although it may have served a social function. Other children talked about the mechanical aspect of their work, such as what colors and shapes to use or how to form a particular object. In other cases, as peers were working, their topics sparked stories of common experiences. For example, pictures of televisions sparked conversations concerning favorite t.v. shows, while a picture of a cottage at a lake inspired a conversation about jet skiing and tubing. Conversation of others seemed more tailored to the topic of their work, describing details and relating storylines. There was some evidence of anxiety or uncertainty reflected in the facial expressions and body posturing of the students. A few children spent an inordinate amount of time organizing and reorganizing materials, a couple voiced their concerns to the teachers, and two were unable to begin without teacher guidance. Without exception, the students appeared compelled to share their work with the teachers, some showing pride and others seeking approval.

Varied interactions were also observed at the second grade level. During the teacher-assigned writing sample many students shared information and experiences related to the topic. In addition, they observed other children's work and offered suggestions regarding information related to the topic and illustrations. Some children worked independently in a quiet fashion, occasionally referring to other children's papers or the classroom vocabulary chart. A few students questioned the teacher about writing mechanics, such as spelling and story length. One child in particular seemed overly concerned with the number of sentences he thought might be required. Questions included, "How do you spell that?" and "How many (sentences) do I need?" A few students talked about unrelated topics, one of whom used this as an avoidance technique. Another took an enormous

amount of time to write only a few words, due in large part to distractibility and a desire to avoid the task.

Second-grade students working on a topic of their choice exhibited similar behaviors to those noted during the first writing sample. The approximate percentage of children working quietly versus those interacting verbally remained fairly constant. The child who used avoidance techniques in the first sample displayed the same avoidance behaviors in the second. A few children offered help to one another in the form of spelling tips or grammatical advice.

The main difference between samples was a tendency for students to be less focused and more relaxed when writing on a topic of their own choosing. Fewer children were concerned with checking on the relative "accuracy" of their topic, while many children felt more comfortable in choosing drawing paper over lined writing paper, including those students for whom writing is not a difficult task. In addition, there was a definite increase in "sidebar" type conversations, those in which the talk was only minimally or not at all connected to the chosen topic.

Probable Causes (site-based)

An analysis of the site in relation to the problem evidence suggests several probable causes. One of these is central to the philosophy/policy of the school district itself. As described in Chapter one, the district curriculum at the primary level is presented using a whole language model. Because of the wide range among the various definitions of whole language, there is similarly a wide range of methods and strategies employed by teachers at the site. As a result of these diverse teaching styles the literacy experiences of the students and the emphasis given to writing varies within and between grade levels. Inconsistent experiences likely result in fragmented learning and decreased achievement.

Accompanying the whole language delivery model is the concept of integrated curriculum. As the district moves forward in its intent to restructure

curriculum (Education 2000), emphasis has been placed on integrating curriculum among all subject areas. In practice this means that almost all work in all subject areas relate to a central theme. The teacher assigns writing topics on the current theme leaving few options for student choice. An absence of ownership, personal experience and knowledge, authenticity, and interest and motivation related to teacher-assigned topics may contribute to the lack of writing development.

Also pertinent to the problem is the amount of time devoted to the instruction and practice of writing at the site. With the addition of new programs, the teachers are faced with the dilemma of teaching more in the same amount of time. Insufficient time is devoted to writing, and the time that is eventually scheduled is often interrupted by specials, lunch, reading groups, and other classroom and school activities.

Furthermore, writing is viewed by some site-teachers as a purely individual task. Consequently, the environment and writing process is structured in such a way as to restrict social and verbal interaction. With the exception of peer-editing for mechanical errors, input and feedback is often confined to the teacher's realm.

The problem evidence suggests that students do not have an understanding of the purpose and kinds of writing. Partly, this may be due to a lack of early home experiences with writing. Many parents read to and with their children from an early age, but they are less likely to write to and with them. This problem is perpetuated in school when the writing process is introduced in a formal, linear manner rather than through play and experimentation. The children are not given developmentally appropriate experiences through which they can explore and construct their own understanding of writing, its purpose and dimensions.

A lack of play and experimentation also reduces the development of a creative, risk-taking attitude toward problem-solving in general and writing in

particular. Rather, it fosters a 'one-right answer' mentality which hampers not only writing development but higher-ordered thinking itself.

Finally, there is an assumption, even among knowledgeable teachers who offer a variety of writing experiences to their students, that all children share a common "Webster's" definition of writing: "To put down on paper, in order to record, relate, explain, or the like; to set down, esp. for others to read". Varied activities and experiences with the writing process do not appear to automatically instill in the students an understanding of the purpose of writing tasks or an ability to apply the writing process outside the immediate activity.

Probable Causes (literature-based)

In light of the documented decline in the quality of children's writing over the past two decades, researchers have shown renewed interest and prolific commitment to examining how children learn to write. One consequence of these efforts has been the identification of numerous probable causes for this decline.

One probable cause has its roots in the way writing is defined. Historically, writing has been viewed as a finished product to be graded, corrected, or analyzed by teachers. Writing was considered a skill that one either possessed or did not; therefore, teachers evaluated writing assignments but did not assist students in the production of them (Hull, 1989). Furthermore, writing was considered a solitary activity. Instruction consisted of isolated practice on elements of mechanics such as grammar and usage, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and handwriting. The pervasiveness of these activities resulted in some teachers losing touch with what writing is really for, and left little time for children to engage in the act of writing (Hicks, 1993; Hull, 1989; Tway, 1985).

Given this definition and these practices, the structure of the classroom was teacher-centered. The goals of the teacher were emphasized, leaving the students

with a fragmented view of language because of fragmented teaching and curriculum.

In 1981, Graves was instrumental in redefining writing as not only a product, but a process leading to the solution of problems. Hillocks (1986) comments:

> This definition seems useful in recognizing that certain aspects of composing may take place well before writing begins and in providing for the thinking that goes on as a prospective writer first encounters, contemplates, and evaluates experience. The process is further delineated as involving "significant" subprocesses (p. 8).

Though promising, the application of Graves' findings has not resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of children's writing. Calkins (1986) attributes this to educators having misinterpreted the stages of the writing process as discrete, linear steps rather than recursive over-lapping ones.

In addition, the writing process approach requires a different pace and classroom structure than exists in most schools. Teachers trying to implement instruction in the writing process are faced with ever-increasing time constraints. Calkins claims this is a reflection of the "one-draft-only mentality" of our schools and society. Frequent interruptions, overloaded curricula, scheduling needs of specialists, and general housekeeping routines, limit the ability of the teacher to provide the large blocks of uninterrupted time considered critical for student writing (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983).

Also limiting are writing programs that do not facilitate the development of individual meaning and purpose. The student's misconception of writing as a task confined to school and controlled by the teacher restricts one's ability to perceive writing as a purposeful means of communication within one's own life. Waring-Chaffee (1994) observed that children demand authenticity in literacy activities

and only demonstrate a genuine intent to participate if they perceive the activities to be of use and value.

Well-intended efforts to motivate children to write will frequently involve sharing stimulating artifacts such as a bird's nest brought in by the teacher, or "creative" story-starters. At best, these result in sparks of enthusiasm for writing which, more often than not, quickly die out. "Teacher-led activities such as these may 'stimulate writing,' but they do not help students become deeply and personally involved in writing" (Calkins, 1986, p. 5). It is pointless then, to expect students to enthusiastically draft and revise their writing when they are not invested in its message or its purpose. They will resist doing so (Temple, Nathan, Temple, Burris, 1993).

If the goal then, is to engage children in authentic writing, the supports for them to do so must be firmly in place. According to Vygotskian (Vygotsky,1978) ideas about the social origin of learning, children must become literate in an interactive social setting. Supportive guidance from adults and peers creates a scaffold for children's learning and is essential for their cognitive development. Therefore, a major source of support in the development of written language is social interaction (Hull, 1986).

However, Applebee (as cited in Hull, 1989) reports that there is not much evidence of appropriate instructional scaffolding in the classrooms he and his colleagues observed. Hull (1989) concurs, reflecting that while "there was a time when administrators could presume to judge a teacher's competence and her students' good will by orderliness and quiet in the writing class; that time is no more" (p. 123).

Chapter 3

PREVAILING THEORY ON POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

A myriad of research articles reports that new parameters have been set for viewing writing not only as a product, but also as a cognitive process embedded in a social context. "Learning takes place in a social environment through interactional exchanges in which what is to be learned is ... a joint construction of the teacher and the [learner] (p. 8)." Cook-Gumperz (as cited in Vukelich, 1993, p. 386). This interactionist perspective developed by Ninio and Bruner, (1978); Vygotsky, (1978) and others is supported by observations of the intuitive methods parents employ when engaged in conversations with their young children. Parents accept and reward approximations, fill in missing information, interpret the intended message and offer confirmation or elaboration. Communication of the message is the focus of their interactions. Children might well benefit from the extension of this perspective into the writing classroom (Newman, 1985; Graves, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978; Vukelich, 1993).

What parents are doing intuitively is what Bruner calls scaffolding; i.e., placing temporary structures around children's language and learning to assist their development. Vygotsky points out that children come to "know" writing as a tool through earlier forms of symbolization -- gesture, speech, dramatic play, and drawing. Each child will lean for support on these other symbolic tools when learning to write, but to varying degrees and in different ways. Some will draw, some will compose a song, some will create a puppet show, and others will attempt to write, using words.

To facilitate these activities, a classroom atmosphere and environment must be created that provides easy accessibility to real-life "literacy sites", areas that simulate restaurants, stores, and post offices ... areas stocked with authentic literacy materials. Through imaginative play in these areas children will mimic

situations and meaningful exchanges which will help them gain insight into the many ways language works and is understood by a reader or writer. This approach is effective because print is encountered and used in a meaningful, functional way and is viewed by children as a legitimate engagement in reading and writing.

The teacher's role is to accept and guide children's literacy efforts through observations, questions, and reflections on their intentions and strategies. In this way, children are "provided a means of entering the world of literacy feeling both comfortable and free from risk and scrutiny" (Waring-Chaffee, 1994, p. 55) (Dyson, 1987; Graves, 1984; Salyer, 1994; Vukelich, 1990).

Traditionally, first writing efforts have been evaluated solely on the basis of the quality of mechanics and grammar. Yet, children's initial writing efforts are often guided by their different styles of composing and supported by different symbolic and social processes. Children often choose unconventional forms of writing, such as scribbling or drawing, based on their individual development and sense of the intent and purpose of the writing process. An effective teacher must be alert to the reality that each child comes to the classroom with multiple internal models of writing processes that will eventually, given numerous opportunities for meaningful writing, result in conventional spelling, punctuation, and writing forms. Such variability in children's approaches requires a waiting, responsive type of teaching which focuses on the message of the writer. It must also be one in which the teacher examines a cluster of behaviors during the composing process. Conferencing, then, becomes the heart of the writing program. The child does most of the leading and the teacher follows, reflecting back observations of the child's understanding of the writing process. Graves reports that the positive effect of conferencing is cumulative, and children who experienced two years of conferences exhibited a noticeable increase in responsibility for their writing and remarkable growth (Dyson, 1987; Graves, 1984; Goodman, 1986; Sulzby, 1992).

If children are to become deeply invested in their writing, the classroom pace and structure must be adjusted to allow them the luxury of time. Sustained effort and craftsmanship require long blocks of uninterrupted time in order to perfect the processes of probing, experimentation, dialogue, and reflection. Children can take control of their own writing processes when a predictable time for writing has been set. They think about and plan their writing even when not directly on task; they have time to rehearse, investigate new information, take notes, collaborate and negotiate with their peers, plan revisions, clarify their purpose and publish their work. (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1984). Being able to sustain a piece of writing in this manner over a longer period of time has been substantiated by Graves (1984) as "not only a clear indication of child growth, but a strong predictor of the quality of the piece" (p. 160).

Due to their pioneering work in writing with young children, Graves, Atwell, and Calkins are generally credited with bringing the "process movement" to the elementary and middle schools. Graves defines the writing process as one that begins "when the writer consciously or unconsciously starts a topic and is finished when the written piece is published" (1984, p.145). Through Graves', Atwell's and Calkins' observation of the overt behaviors of young writers they identified several important sub-processes which include topic choice, rehearsal, composing, reading and revision. Graves is careful to point out that there is no set order to this writing process, but it is highly personal to the individual author and piece. Calkins elaborates on this point adding that "the shifts between rehearsal, drafting, revision, and editing occur minute by minute, second by second, throughout the writing process" (1986, p. 18).

The implications of these findings for the teacher of writing are varied. To begin, the teacher must give up control. No longer can teachers "plan" for rehearsal on Monday, drafting on Tuesday, drafting and revision on Wednesday

and Thursday, and editing on Friday. What the teacher does need to plan, however, is how to structure writing time so children know what to expect and can take control of their own writing processes. This is accomplished by the establishment of routines and guidelines for each stage of writing, thereby freeing the teacher from directing activities and allowing time for circulating, listening, and conferencing.

In addition, Graves (1984) proposes that teachers let children chose their topics as often as 80 % of the time. In doing so, the writing not only becomes more personally meaningful, but also begins the process of revision in relation to topic selection and aids in the development of basic decision-making skills. Graves cautions that relying on teacher-assigned topics will lead children to parrot their teacher's voice. There is much to gain from allowing children to choose their own topics. "Children will choose topics more wisely as they develop an understanding of the writing process. Preliminary data ... suggested a strong relationship between topic choice, writing quality, and the emergence of new writing concepts" (Graves, 1984, p. 161).

Finally, when we speak of teaching writing, we must expand our focus to encompass reading and writing as essentially social acts. It is impossible to learn or utilize language from the sidelines; participation is vital. Children who discuss their ideas with others enhance their ability to interact with and create oral and written language. Given the freedom to exchange ideas, they will create a community of communication which is mutually supportive of the targeted task of writing about the world in which they live (Newman, 1985; Temple, Nathan, Temple, Burris, 1993; Salyer, 1994).

Talk is the foundation of social interaction. It is functional and contributes to the building of meaning. By carefully listening to and encouraging children's talk, teachers can begin to uncover the richness and importance of their messages.

That knowledge can then be used to guide their conversations with children about their writing ... "use it to support, nudge, lead, plan, or negotiate in ways far richer than if their writing had never become talk or their talk, writing" (Salyer, 1994, p. 42).

After reviewing the evidence of the problem and noting that key stumbling blocks to writing seemed to center around both a lack of relevancy and social interaction, the following Project Outcomes and Solution Components were formulated.

Project Outcomes

As a result of the use of integrated instruction in the writing process that stresses relevancy and social interaction, during the period of September 1995 through February 1996, the targeted Kindergarten through 2nd-grade students will increase their ability to communicate effectively in writing, as evidenced by writing samples, teacher observations, and student reflections.

Methods of Assessment

To determine the extent to which the problem presently exists within the targeted classrooms the teacher-researchers designed an assessment plan containing four key components. These components include conducting student interviews, collecting and scoring on a team-devised rubric a variety of writing samples, maintaining anecdotal records, and recording reflections in research journals. Both pre- and post-data collection will be conducted using this assessment plan.

Solution Components

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. a series of experiences that promote the construction of a personal view of writing as a desirable form of communication.

2. establish a framework for organizing the classroom environment and procedures for the direct instruction and guided practice of writing.
3. create a classroom climate that encourages social interaction as an integral part of the writing process.

To achieve these outcomes a plan that would allow students to increase their ability to communicate effectively in writing by promoting activities that encouraged the development of meaning and a sense of community was established. When assembling this plan, it became clear that normal developmental stages would necessitate a slightly different plan for kindergarten than for first and second grade. Therefore, two parallel plans were developed which followed the same sequential path, but utilized more hands-on activities for the primarily pre-graphic kindergarten students.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective described above, three process objectives were written to guide the sequence and selection of activities to be included in the action plans. Relevancy, addressed in the first objective, was to be prompted in the kindergarten level by exploring the purposes of writing through play centers, while older students would write with an eventual interest to publish and market an anthology of their collected works. The organized instructional framework of the second objective was to be established in the lower level by teacher-led discussions of different types of books; dictated, group writing, individual invented stories and informal/formal conferencing. The upper levels would accomplish the same objective through the use of author stories, mini-lessons, regularly scheduled writing times and informal/formal conferencing. Finally, social interaction as an objective for kindergartners would stem from activities involved with the play area, student mailboxes and free-write journals. Older students would meet this final objective during set writing times, when social interaction would be encouraged.

Kindergarten Action Plan

I. Data collection to evidence the problem (Beginning September)

A. Conduct student interview

B. Collect two initial writing samples

1. First sample -- unit-related topic
2. Second sample (one week later) -- student choice topic
3. Complete anecdotal observations and checklist during sample writing
4. Score writing samples, using rubrics

C. Write daily entries in teachers' research journals (on-going)

D. Select students to be targeted for case study; three per classroom

II. Initial Intervention -- Daily teacher read- aloud storytime (Beginning September/On-going)

A. Share unit related or genre specific books

B. Provide guided practice in the use of Praise-Question-Suggestion (P.Q.S.) strategy

C. Facilitate spontaneous/student-generated discussion

III. Establish discovery approach to writing through play (October)

A. Play Area

1. Introduce play area
   a. set up real-life settings and situations (store, post office)
   b. supply materials and models related to literacy activities appropriate to settings and situations
   c. introduce and model rules and procedures for using play area
2. Implement use of play area
   a. schedule twice a week for 30 to 40 minutes
   b. student-chosen interactions within play area

c. introduce and model rules and procedures for using play area

d. debrief students' literacy experiences and discoveries during play situation

B. Initiate Mailbox System (End November)

1. Set up student mailboxes
2. Demonstrate use of mailboxes to send messages to classmates and school personnel
3. Begin student participation as a free choice activity

C. Construct Writing Wall (September/On-going)

1. Establish area easily accessible to students for writing wall
2. Class collects and displays a variety of artifacts

D. Facilitate "Meet the Author" Experiences (Late October)

1. Preview author's works
2. Author presentation at whole school assembly
3. Class debriefing
4. Group stories patterned after author's works

E. Discover Authors in unexpected places (December)

1. Authors as guest speakers from within school community
   a. teachers/aides
   b. secretaries
   c. principal
   d. administration center personnel

IV. Formalize the Writing Process (October through January)

A. Initiate Preliminary Stage

1. Teacher-led discussions of purposes and kinds of writing
2. Dictated group writing
3. Shape books

a. home participation

b. student invented stories stimulated by the shape of book cover

c. written or dictated by student

d. share with class

4. Author's chair to highlight students' writing

5. In-house publishing of selected work

B. Incorporate Advanced Stage (January)

1. Mini-lessons, (as described Atwell, Avery)

2. Teacher assigned journal writing

3. Free-write journal (student chosen time and topic)

C. Conduct Conferences (January)

1. Student pair-share

2. Student to teacher

a. informal, mini-conferences as teacher circulates among writers

b. formal conferences based on need, as determined by student or teacher

c. formal conferences before publishing

3. Parent/Teacher Conferences

a. at end of first and second quarters

b. utilize showcase portfolio to share writing development and set future goal(s)

V. Anthology Project

A. Invite students to participate in class anthology project (Beginning January)

1. Each student will submit a self-selected piece of writing from previous or new works

2. Submission will be compiled and bound into a finished form

B. Supervise student marketing of anthology to targeted consumer groups (i.e., relatives)

C. Support students' decision-making process to determine how to recycle profits back into literacy-related materials/activities

VI. Data Collection To Assess Effectiveness of Interventions (End of January/beginning of February)

A. Collect student input on individual growth and development related to writing

1. Conduct post-interviews of students
2. Collect student reflections (written or dictated) on showcase portfolio entries

B. Collect two writing samples from portfolios per quarter to be scored on the team-devised rubrics

1. One student-selected
2. One teacher-selected

C. Complete periodic anecdotal observations and checklist during writing activities

1. Focus on targeted case study students
2. Summarize information on class as a whole

D. Record daily entries in teachers' research journals

E. Collate above data (A-D) specifically related to case study students

First and Second Grade Action Plan

I. Data collection to evidence the problem (Beginning September)

A. Conduct student interviews

B. Collect two initial writing samples

1. First sample-- unit-related topic
2. Second sample (one week later) -- student choice topic

3. Complete anecdotal observations and checklist during sample writing
4. Score writing samples using rubrics

C. Write daily entries in teachers' research journals (On-going)

D. Select students to be targeted for case study; three per classroom

II. Initial Interventions -- Establishing Routines (Beginning September/On-going)

A. Conduct daily teacher read-aloud storytime

1. Unit-related or author specific books
2. Guided practice in use of Praise-Question-Suggestion (P.Q.S.) strategy
3. Facilitate spontaneous/student-generated discussion
4. Categorize form/purpose of book on "literature wall"

B. Establish Drop Everything And Read (D.E.A.R.)
(Week #2 in September)

1. Establish/explain procedures
   a. assign, cross-grade partner/base group
   b. self-selection of book(s) to read
   c. approximately 15 minutes of partner/base group reading
   d. approximately five minutes for debriefing
2. Implement D.E.A.R. three-four times weekly for 20 minutes

C. Establish Drop Everything And Write
(D.E.A.W.)

1. Teacher-modeled writing (Week #3 in September)
   a. think-aloud while writing
   b. continue guided practice use of Praise-Question-Suggestion (P.Q.S.) strategy

2. Establish/explain procedures (Week #4 in September)
    a. class meeting -- individuals report on writing plans
    b. mini-lesson, if appropriate
    c. writing groups/student options
        1) individual
        2) partner
        3) multiple authors
    d. writing on self-selected topics and genres
    e. sharing time using P.Q.S. feedback strategy
    f. clean-up/organization of work area/materials
        1) place writing piece in appropriate folder (working folder, showcase portfolio)
        2) personal materials
        3) classroom materials
3. Implement D.E.A.W. three times weekly for 40-50 minutes (Beginning October/on-going)

III. Discover Approach to Writing Processes Through Author Study

A. Focus study on commercially published authors (September/on-going)
    1. Share several books of selected author/genre
        a. whole class
        b. in reading groups, where appropriate
        c. author's center
    2. Discuss author's work/background
    3. Art projects, whole class patterned after author's style
    4. Write letter(s) to author

B. Facilitate "Meet the Author" experiences (Late October)
    1. Coordinate with principal and P.T.A.

2. Preview of author as outlined in III. A. (above)
3. Author presentation at whole school assembly
4. Interview the author -- whole class activity
5. Follow-up activities through author center

C. Discover authors in unexpected places (Beginning November/on-going)
1. Authors as guest speakers from within the school community
a. teachers/aides
b. secretaries
c. principal
d. administration center personnel
2. Authors as guest speakers from the local community
a. parents/relatives
b. business persons

IV. Formalizing the Writing Process

A. Chart and display stages of the writing process agreed upon by the class, based on their experiences (see III) in Author Study Activities and their own writing (End September/revise throughout)

B. Initiate mini-lessons -- concise and direct instruction on specific elements of the writing process (modeled on the work of Atwell; Avery) (Beginning October/on-going)

C. Conduct conferences (Beginning October/on-going)
1. Student to student
a. informal, mini-conferences based on need, as determined by the student/author
b. prior to student/teacher publishing conference (See Appendix G)
2. Student to teacher
a. informal, mini-conferences as teacher circulates among writers

b. formal conferences based on need, as determined by student or teacher

c. formal conferences before publishing (See Appendix H)

3. Three-way literacy conference (End January/beginning February)

a. student/parents/teacher

b. at end of second or third quarter

c. utilize showcase portfolio to share writing development and set future goal(s)

D. Publish

1. Student as publisher

2. Parent-assisted publishing

V. Anthology Project (Beginning January)

A. Introduce project

1. Student exposure to literature authored by other children (e.g. Monster series, Learning to Swim in Swaziland, Endangered Species.)

2. Students introduced to several examples of actual published anthologies

3. Invite students to participate in class anthology project (Mid-April)

a. each student will submit a self-selected piece of writing

b. submissions will be compiled and bound into a finished form

B. Supervise student marketing of anthology to targeted consumer groups; i.e., relatives

C. Support students in decision-making process to determine how to recycle profits back into literacy-related materials/activities

VI. End Data Collection to Assess Effectiveness of Interventions (End January/Beginning February)

A. Collect student input on individual growth and development related to writing
    1. Conduct post-interviews of students
    2. Collect student reflections (written or dictated) on showcase portfolio entries
B. Collect two writing samples from portfolios per quarter to be scored on the team-devised rubrics
    1. One student-selected
    2. One teacher-selected
C. Periodically complete anecdotal observations and checklist during writing activities
    1. Focus on targeted case study students
    2. Summarize information on class as a whole
D. Record daily entries in teachers' research journals
E. Collate above data (A-D) specifically related to case study students

Chapter 4

PROJECT RESULTS

An Historical Description of the Intervention

The overall intent of the research project was to improve the ability of the targeted students to communicate effectively in writing. The action plan implemented to meet this objective was threefold. The students were simultaneously engaged in a series of experiences and activities designed to develop a view of writing as a personally meaningful form of communication while the classroom environment and procedures were organized to facilitate the direct instruction and guided practice of writing. In conjunction with these interventions a classroom climate fostering social interaction as an integral part of the writing process was established.

Data Collection. The first phase of the action plan was to collect data to evidence the problem through student interviews, writing samples, anecdotal records, and teachers' research journals. Case study students were also to be selected.

Student interviews (See Appendix A) were conducted within the first two weeks of the school year. The teachers regularly assigned to each classroom interviewed students individually and recorded their responses. Subsequently, writing samples were collected on two occasions approximately one week apart, and scored on the team-devised rubrics (See Appendices E and F).

For the first writing sample the teachers selected the subject. Students were invited to record on paper in some fashion their ideas regarding a unit-related topic. For the purposes of this research the topics assigned to kindergarten, first and second grades were "Colors," "Bees," and "Insects" respectively. On the second writing sample the students were allowed to choose their own topics. In both cases, conscious efforts were made to avoid using the word "write" or to

imply in any way that written words were required. This was based on the premise that children may have developed unconventional forms of writing such, such as scribbling and drawing , as influenced by their developmental stages and their understanding of the intent and purpose of writing as a form of communication. It was vital to the research that an openness to all forms of writing be communicated to the children.

During both sample writing sessions and subsequent writing times, anecdotal observations and checklists were to be completed (See Appendices C and D). This was accomplished for the sample and initial writing times; however, it quickly proved to be impractical on a daily basis. The recording process interfered significantly with the teachers' ability to effectively assist and instruct the students in their writing. Due to time constraints and other district obligations the teacher-researchers also found it cumbersome to maintain personal daily journals. Additionally, the teachers found that social interaction among the research team produced more profound reflections and greater continuity among grade levels. Thus, individual teacher journals and anecdotals were abandoned in favor of the establishment of a weekly team journal session. As a direct result of this modification the selection of case study students was deemed unnecessary.

For a variety of reasons including individual student readiness, curriculum demands, calendar events and a somewhat over-ambitious plan, the times set forth in the action plan were used as a sequential guide for implementation, rather than a rigid timeline. Plans for beginning implementation of each successive intervention were determined by consensus of the teacher-researcher team.

Interventions. Daily teacher read-aloud storytime was the first intervention initiated at all grade levels. This intervention continued throughout the term of the research project. Each teacher chose unit-related, genre specific, or author specific literature to share with the students. Sharing time included spontaneous, student-

generated discussions and periodic guided practice in the use of the Praise-Question-Suggestion (P.Q.S.) strategy (See Appendix F). At the 1st- and 2nd-grade levels the literature was also categorized by form/purpose and displayed upon classroom "literature walls" for future reference.

Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) was established as a multi-age/grade activity for the first and second graders. Meeting on an average of three times per week, the students independently read self-selected books to their partner(s). Each reading session ended with a whole class debriefing during which various aspects of the literature shared were discussed and reflected upon. The positive social interactions of the partnerships were also a frequent topic of the debriefing (See Appendix F).

At the kindergarten level a discovery approach to writing was established through the use of play areas involving real-life settings, situations and materials. Rules and procedures for play areas were established as each play area was introduced and modeled. Students were regularly offered the choice to participate within the play area twice a week for 20 to 30 minutes, after which the students debriefed about literacy experiences and discoveries made during the play situation. The option to use play areas during other free times was available. Play areas were conducive to students choosing to explore/use a variety of writing forms, i.e. scribbling, drawing pictures, copying written models, and using phonetic/conventional writing, for a variety of purposes. In the store play area students wrote shopping lists, coupons, receipts and signs, while in the post office play area the written products included notes, cards, letters, and addressed envelopes. As an off-shoot of the post office play area, an established mailbox system will enable the children to communicate with one another in writing throughout the remainder of the year (See Appendix F).

Similarly, the first and second graders employed a discovery approach to the writing process through a series of author studies, including Eric Carle, Chris Van Allsburg and Mem Fox. Students were actively engaged in exploring and experimenting with the works, styles, and illustrations of each author, as well as learning about the background and writing approach of each (See Appendix F).

Using the first author study as a catalyst, the teacher-researchers offered the students the opportunity to form partnerships for writing letters to Eric Carle. Letter-writing was modeled through the school's e-mail network system. Messages were composed and exchanged between the 1st- and 2nd-grade classrooms. Building on this experience the classes jointly composed a sample letter to Eric Carle utilizing the LCD computer projector. Ultimately, the students spent several writing times cooperatively drafting letters and illustrations to Eric Carle, thus establishing a framework for the activity referred to as Drop Everything and Write.

Drop Everything and Write (D.E.A.W.) was designed to provide an extended (one hour) regularly scheduled block of time for the sole purpose of writing. The essence of D.E.A.W. was student choice and control ... choice of writing individually or with a partner(s), choice of topic, choice of writing media, choice of genre, choice of presentation, and control over the about of time devoted to each piece and the quality required to consider a piece finished (See Appendix F).

Interaction among students was spontaneously generated and intentionally encouraged. Students brainstormed topic ideas, shared similar experiences related to stories in progress, sought assistance with spelling or story development, and solicited feedback from peers. Sometimes discussions did not directly relate to the writing task but strengthened the link between oral and written language as forms of communication.

The role of the teacher was to facilitate the above interactions, to provide direct instruction in the mechanics and processes of writing, and to conference formally and informally, with the young authors. The students' eagerness to begin the writing task compromised the effectiveness of direct instruction at the beginning of D.E.A.W. time. Therefore, adjustments were made so direct instruction could be given at other times of the day. Direct instruction included mini-lessons on mechanics such as capitals and punctuation, sentence structure and spelling. Additional lessons focused on logical story development, innovative beginnings to stories and the use of action and details.

The third function of the teachers was to conference, formally and informally, with the students. To accomplish this function, additional forms were developed. One form (See Appendix G) documented the reflections of the authors on a finished piece and recorded plans for sharing work at a later date. The second form (See Appendix H) guided the students through the steps of the publishing process, a process which began with a personal verification of a clear and logical storyline. An author-run P.Q.S. conference with two to three peers occurred next, followed by a formal teacher conference focused on story content and development. Any revisions necessitated by these activities were made prior to the editing stage. Editing was accomplished first with a peer and subsequently with a teacher. Edited drafts were then typed by the students or teachers. When illustrations and covers were completed, the material was laminated, dated, bound and presented to the author along with a "Published Author" button.

After exploring the form and purpose of writing as presented in the discovery play areas, the kindergartners began to examine the writing process in a more formal manner through teacher-led discussions of various types of writing that the children may have observed or experienced in their everyday lives both in and out of school. During these discussions students were asked to reflect on the

intended message of the author; thus, reinforcing their developing view of writing as a communication tool. Care was taken to include discussions of written pieces, not only commercially prepared, but also authored by parents, teachers, people in the community and the children themselves.

In the preliminary stages of direct writing instruction, the kindergarten students were introduced to the writing process through dictation taken by the teacher in large groups, smaller cooperative groups and on an individual basis. The early writings included stories, letters, word lists and the relating of personal experiences. Teacher/student dictation soon expanded to include parent/student dictation at home. Students were given the choice of participating in writing their own stories in shape books, i.e. a lion-shaped book might facilitate a student's invented a story about a lion, circus, jungle, etc. These books were given out once a week and, although it was on optional home assignment, most students eagerly participated week after week. Student shape books were read during the following week by the author or teacher while the child sat in the place of honor, the author's chair. The author's chair was used by any students sharing their written work, thus recognizing and enhancing the worth of written products. Written work was further recognized by in-house publishing of students' selected written pieces.

Instructional mini-lessons based mainly on sentence structure, phonetic spelling, story order and writing form helped students advance through the writing process. These skills were practiced and developed through beginning journal writing which consisted of both teacher assigned and student chosen topics, such as school events and personal interests. Students participated in journal writing as part of their daily schedule and as an option during their free time.

Plans to bring students in personal contact with a variety of authors proved to be a more formidable task than was first anticipated. Due to financial constraints and the tight timeline set for the research project, a commercially

published author was unattainable. However, the kindergarten through 2nd-grade students were afforded the opportunity to meet and interact with an adult who was involved in the process of trying to commercially publish an original children's story. After reading her story the author related where the ideas for her book came from and the revising process she went through in reaching this stage. The children were then asked to assist the author in creating the physical depiction of the main character, and later to further assist by individually choosing and illustrating a favorite passage from the story. The author promised to consider these illustrations when designing the final draft of her work.

A second author, proficient in a different medium also sought the assistance of the 1st- and 2nd-grade students. A reporter from a large suburban newspaper was invited to share her personal and professional experiences related to writing. Following her presentation she asked the children to help her compose a column concerning presidential campaign promises. After gathering suitable quotes from students regarding promises they would make if running for president, the reporter used the LCD computer projector to demonstrate how a column is produced. She referred to various concepts involved in newspaper writing such as the art of being clear, concise, organized and interesting. She also spoke at length about the necessity of numerous revisions and cooperative interaction between reporter and editor(s). The completed column was published in the newspaper a few days later. The students were inspired to suggest starting a school newspaper; the reporter offered her assistance in this future endeavor (See Appendix F).

The kindergarten action plan called for student-to-student and student-to-teacher conferencing. This was accomplished by the teacher circulating among the writers, informally conferencing as they worked. It was the consensus of the research team that student developmental readiness prohibited the introduction of more formal conferencing procedures at that time. Standard parent/teacher

conferences at the kindergarten level were held at the end of the first quarter to share student progress. By the end of the second quarter which coincided with the end of the research period, kindergarten parent/teacher conferences included portfolios containing student writing samples which were used to demonstrate individual improvement and to set future goals for the class.

At the 1st- and 2nd-grade levels, three-way student literacy conferences were conducted at the end of the second quarter (See Appendix F). In preparation for these conferences, students reviewed their body of work and selected two pieces which showcased their growth and development as writers. At conferences the students shared both their selections and their reflections with parents and teachers, who then offered feedback from their own perspectives. To conclude, a writing goal was selected by the student. The conference participants then discussed and formulated a plan for supporting work toward the desired goal.

The proposed Anthology project was planned to take place outside the time parameters of the research project. Following exposure to published literature authored by other children and the examination of published anthologies, each student will be invited to submit a self-selected piece of writing to be compiled, bound and marketed to targeted consumer groups, i.e. relatives and member of the school community.

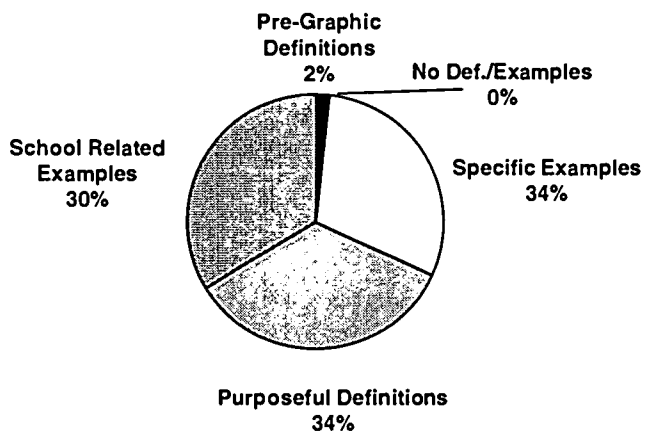
Post-interviews and reflections of students were collected in a manner consistent with initial data collection procedures. Quarterly writing samples, one student-choice topic and one teacher-assigned topic were collected and scored on the aforementioned team-devised rubrics. As previously indicated anecdotal observations and checklist information was gleaned from the team's weekly reflection journal. These comprised the end data collection for assessing the effectiveness of the prescribed interventions.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

A compilation of data collected from questions one through three of the student interviews, which dealt with the ability of students to define writing and its purpose, produced the following results. Of the 61 students interviewed, all were now able to define or give examples of writing to some degree.. The responses of 2% of the students indicated a pre-graphic definition related to drawing. Thirty percent of the respondents could define writing as related to school activities/experiences, and an additional 34 % were able to extend their definitions with specific examples beyond the school setting. The responses of the remaining 34 % reflected an emerging, purposeful definition of writing. This information is graphically depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Student Interview Questions One Through Three Post - Data



These results indicated a decrease which ranged from 12-17 % in the number of students working at the initial stages of defining writing. A subsequent increase of 5 % were at a middle stage of development, while an increase of 26 %

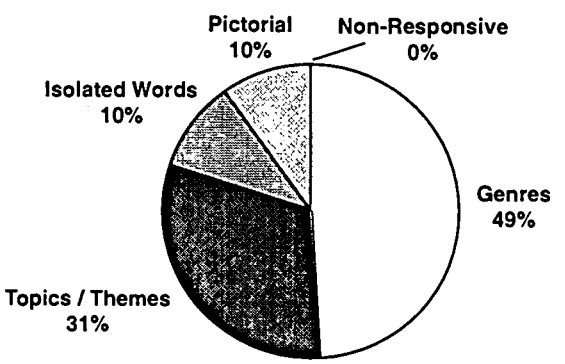
articulated development at a stage commensurate with an emerging, purposeful definition.

The students' perception of themselves as writers was the focus of questions 4 through 8 of the student interview. A breakdown of responses indicated students were at the following stages: 0 % at the non-responsive stage, 10 % at both the pictorial and isolated word stages, 31 % at the topic/theme stage and 49 % at the genre stage. These results reveal a significant decrease of 20 % at the pictorial stage and an increase of 30 % at the genre stage of writing development (See Figure 5 below).

Sixty-one students produced a writing sample based on a teacher-assigned topic. The results as scored on the team-devised rubric were: 2 % produced a pictorial piece unrelated to the assigned topic, 0 % correlated pictures with the assigned topic, 19 % attempted to organize a storyline through the use of pictures, 53 % used simple sentences which usually related to the topic but sometimes contained irrelevant information, 7 % added details to support main ideas, and the remaining 19 % included more complex sentences and supporting details to create well-developed pieces of writing.

Figure 5

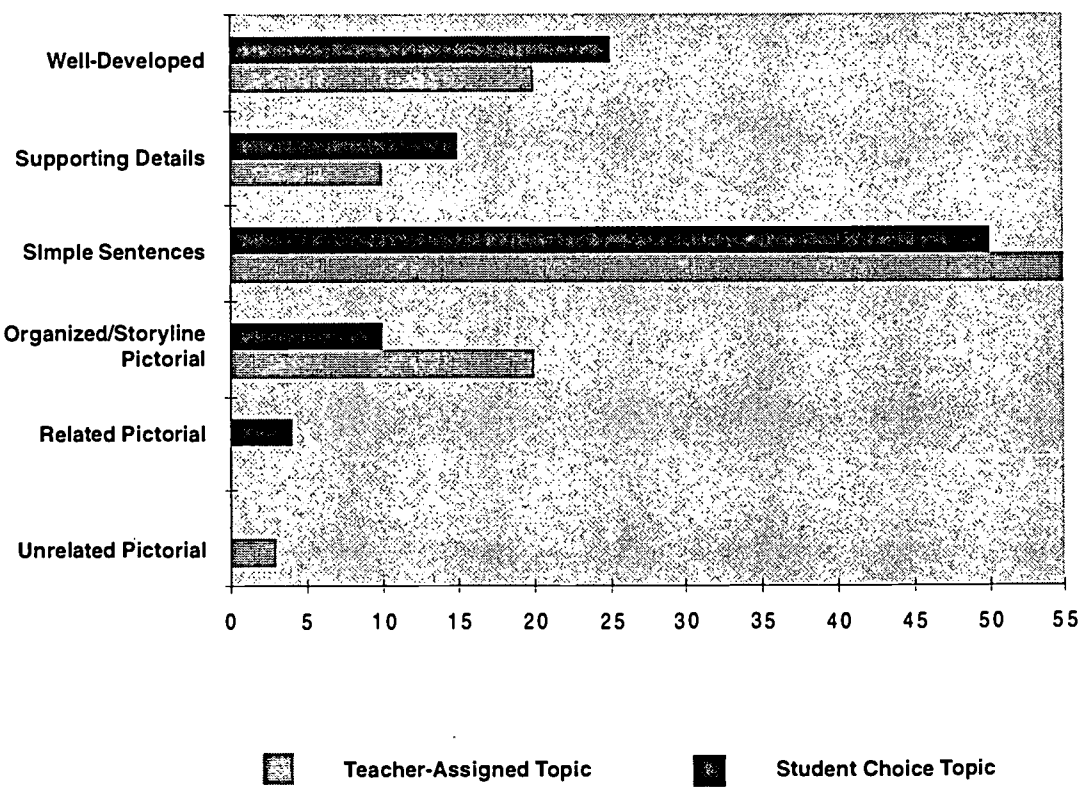
Student Interview Questions Four Through Eight Post - Data



The second writing samples in which students generated their own topics, were collected and scored in the same fashion as the first samples. On the second samples, no students wrote pieces that were unrelated to the topic. Three percent produced pictorial pieces that were related to their chosen topic and an additional 8 % used pictures to organize a storyline. Fifty-two percent of the students' writing contained simple sentence structures which may have included some unrelated information. Pieces comprised of simple/complex sentences with some supporting details accounted for 12 % of the writing samples. The remaining 25 % were categorized as well-developed. Figure 6 indicates the results from both writing samples in the clustered categories.

Figure 6

Student Writing Samples Post - Data



In comparing the pre-and post-data of both the student-choice and teacher-assigned samples, a significant decrease averaging 47 % was noted in the areas encompassing picture writing, i.e. unrelated and related pictorials/topics and pictorials used to organize a storyline. An increase averaging 32 % was seen in the category comprised primarily of simple sentences. A combined increase averaging 21 % was evidenced in the latter categories of supporting details and well-developed writing.

This data documented consistent improvement between the pre- and post-data in all broad categories. A more detailed analysis of the data comparing student-choice topics and teacher-assigned topics revealed higher quality pieces were produced on teacher-assigned topics in the initial samplings. In contrast, end-data samplings revealed higher quality pieces were produced on student-choice topics.

Anecdotal records kept by the team on a weekly basis reflected the social interactions among the students, their developing view of and attitude toward writing, and the classroom environments and procedures set in place to support the prescribed interventions. Throughout the writing experiences social interaction occurred spontaneously and was encouraged and supported by the teacher-researchers.

While initial interactions of the kindergarten students were observed to primarily provide clarification of the task, subsequent interactions evolved for the purpose of scaffolding their ideas and experiences in order to more closely simulate real-life situations involving writing. For example, some took on the role of cashier in the store play area and sought out those with coupons, checks and shopping lists to actively play out the scenario. During the play situations those individuals with more pre-writing experiences became models for other emerging writers. Forms of writing varied depending on skill level and perceived need,

ranging from scribbling writing and pictures to the use of environmental print and labeling. In addition, a dramatic increase in independent problem-solving was observed by the teacher-researcher. For example, after making a grocery list using newspaper ads and coupons, the students were dismayed to find that many of the items on their list were not available in their store. To insure a more successful shopping trip, the students started to make their lists by copying the labels directly off items on their store shelves. Others were frustrated by the low-tech capabilities of the toy register which could not dispense actual receipts. Resourceful students found rolls of adding machine tapes and produced their own receipts.

Students spontaneously and enthusiastically shared both their written products and the process by which the products were created. This dimension was observed to be a critical factor in the students' level of personal satisfaction with the experience. The ensuing rise in confidence and increasingly meaningful view of writing led to an unprecedented openness to more demanding and conventional writing tasks, such as the mailbox system and journal writing.

The teacher-researchers working with the first and second graders documented a variety of social interactions similar to those recorded in the kindergarten setting. Modeling proved to be a major catalyst in the writing process for these students. Forays into the world of writing were initially made by a few second graders. This was encouraged and validated by offering them the immediate opportunity to share completed work with both classrooms, thus giving value and status to both the writer and the writing and providing the impetus for others' subsequent writing attempts. This student-generated enthusiasm for writing provided the teachers a natural opportunity to introduce the intervention referred to as Drop Everything and Write (D.E.A.W.). Conducted with mixed-grade groupings this established the main core of the actual writing time for the first and second graders.

During the writing time the children were constantly interacting with each other, serving a number of needs. As time progressed, the researchers observed a decrease in talk unrelated to the writing task and an increase in conversations centering on topic-related experiences and problem-solving. Students became less focused on mechanics and teacher-assigned parameters and more focused on interesting content, details, and word choices. They eagerly sought input from each other regarding these elements of their writing. They offered each other praise and suggestions and attempted to ask clarifying questions. Further assistance on mechanics, such as spelling and punctuation was also sought.

In comparison to behaviors exhibited during the initial samplings, the students became less dependent on teacher reassurances and/or approval and more interested in peer reactions to their works-in-progress. They were able to delay the need for teacher feedback until their work was completed. Sharing with the teacher at that time became more of a celebration and less of a judgment.

Initial writing products were predominantly picture books and patterned stories, often minimal in length and weak in the area of story development. In time, many students began to experiment with different types of writing, such as songs, skits and poems. As they experienced various forms of writing, they became more adept at recognizing and identifying different genres of both their own and commercially published stories. Students were heard to say, "I want to write an adventure story next," "I'm gonna' do a Van Allsburg book," or "My story was realistic fiction, but now it's mostly fantasy."

In addition to a growing familiarity with the purposes of different genres of "story writing," the students also demonstrated an understanding of the purposes of writing in their day-to-day living and actively sought out writing opportunities. Students were often observed writing notes to the teacher and each other, creating signs to hang on their desks, lockers and personal belongings, and requesting to

use the computer to send e-mail messages to another class. Parents reported their children were writing at the laundromat, choosing writing in lieu of watching television or playing video games, or arranging for friends to get together to write on home computers. Children shared these works from home as eagerly as those produced in school and added them to their writing portfolios.

Anecdotal records of the teacher-researchers documented a similar transfer of writing abilities and attitudes within the more rigid parameters set forth for unit-related writing assignments. On these assignments, the children demonstrated greater degrees of confidence and independence than had been noted in previous years. The writing was of greater length with more complex sentence structures, contained more details and had a clearer voice.

Evidence of students' enthusiasm for writing was demonstrated through student requests. Teachers were frequently asked, "Do we have writing time today?" and an affirmative answer elicited a cacophony of cheers. Similarly, a chorus of groans was heard in response to the ringing of the lunch/recess bell that also signaled the end of writing time. This would invariably be followed by requests to stay in for recess to continue working on their pieces. If denied, some students would take their materials outside with them and continue writing in a corner of the playground.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

After reviewing current research on the topic of writing development and analyzing the site data, the researchers designed an action plan based on three broad categories: integrated instruction, social interaction and relevance. Upon examining the results of the project, those three aspects proved to be essential to the achievement of the terminal objective.

In the area of integrated instruction the researchers found several organizational factors that impacted the daily operations of the intervention plan.

The most critical of these was time. In kindergarten the children needed time--time to play, to explore, to discover, to relate, to enjoy and ultimately to make writing their own. For the first and second graders, hour-long blocks of regularly scheduled time afforded them the on-going opportunity to plan, organize, and carry out their ideas with the certainty that they would be given whatever time they needed to do so successfully. Initially, the teacher-researchers were concerned that the students would not know how to appropriately utilize such a large amount of time for the sole purpose of writing. In reality, it quickly became apparent that the opposite was true ... there never seemed to be enough time.

In conjunction with time a discovery approach to writing was a vital element of integrated instruction. The hands-on activities offered, in both the kindergarten play areas and in the 1st- and 2nd-grade author studies, reached all students at all levels. The store and post office were high interest areas for the kindergartners. Equally stimulating for the first and second graders were the tissue paper art, splatter painting and ingenuity of author/illustrator Eric Carle.

This approach allowed students the opportunity to experience writing in familiar and real-life situations and laid a firm foundation for scaffolding future experiences. It was also a major factor in students developing the confidence, motivation and readiness for later writing tasks. Moreover, it was essential in promoting writing as an enjoyable experience.

Connections between the discoveries in the play areas and author studies and their own writing attempts were fostered by the careful selection of books shared in the read-aloud format. Teachers further supported this by guiding discussions of the books using the P.Q.S. strategy and by modeling writing in both group and individual situations. Think-aloud modeling was also utilized as a tool of direct instruction through mini-lessons.

It was extremely important that the focus, frequency and extent of the mini-lessons be determined by needs arising out of students' discoveries. For example, as students discovered a need to have characters in their stories talk to each other, the teachers used mini-lessons to directly instruct in the mechanics of using dialogue. Depending upon the students' stage of writing development, this instruction might be limited to identifying the speaker or might include the proper use of quotation marks. Although the teacher-researchers intended to provide mini-lessons for small groups of students sharing a common need, this was generally not possible, for logistical reasons. Students would later draw on these experiences when working on their own pieces or independently conferencing with their peers using the P.Q.S. strategy.

As a result of utilizing the P.Q.S. strategy in peer conferencing, students were more adept at evaluating their own work. This allowed teachers to abandon more traditional evaluative methods in favor of student evaluation, shifting the responsibility to the student via peer feedback and self-reflection. A positive impact in this shifting of responsibility was a decrease in pressure to perform compared to students of previous years. Students were able to take greater ownership of their work, shifting the focus from teacher expectation to personal satisfaction. As this occurred, the teacher-researchers observed greater experimentation and risk-taking in the young authors, resulting in more effective products,

It was the consensus of the research team that social interaction, the second broad category of the action plan, was fundamental to students' success. Anecdotal records were peppered with comments from teachers and students that referred to co-authoring, student-run P.Q.S. conferences, role-playing, modeling, problem-solving, sharing, cooperative group writing, participating as an active audience... Social interaction was observed to be so pervasive and ingrained

across all grade levels and all related writing activities that its value to the students was indisputable.

The students' view of social interaction as an integral part of writing made it nearly impossible for them to curtail these interactions when faced with the restrictions required by participation in the Young Authors' Conference (See Appendix F). This project prohibited co-authored manuscripts and emphasized that each piece be an individual effort. Their commitment and need for continuous peer input and the natural desire to share works in progress caused them to find creative ways to skirt the rules at every opportunity. For example, while co-authoring was not allowed, the students huddled together in small groups, sharing ideas and experiences on similar topics. They were quick to point out, however, that they were each "doing their own paper." The final products proved to be diverse both in content and style and reflected the individual voice of each author. It was interesting to note that 50 % of the Young Author representatives selected from the site building were members of the targeted classrooms. Furthermore, the district representative for kindergarten through second grade was also a member of this group.

Student choice and control, as detailed in the historical description of the intervention, were instrumental in establishing a personal view of writing as relevant and meaningful. This was substantiated by data generated by the post-writing samples which revealed that students produced higher quality pieces when selecting their own topics, in contrast to those produced when topics were assigned by teachers. A review of the student interview results also supported this conclusion, as an increase of 26 % of the students articulated a purposeful definition of writing. Furthermore, all of the students described themselves as successful writers and reflected positive feelings related to writing. As previously mentioned, anecdotal records indicated that students continually took the initiative

in expanding the ways in which they personally used writing as a form of communication, i.e. writing plays, poems, notes, letters, songs, etc. Students also demonstrated a greater degree of metacognition concerning their writing. They showed a greater ability to identify, articulate and incorporate many of the elements that result in a quality writing piece. In summary, the statistical data, anecdotal records and professional experiences of the action researchers supported the element of relevancy, the final aspect of the action plan as necessary to the development of writing as an effective communication tool.

When viewed in its entirety, the action plan represents a comprehensive approach to developing writing in young children. The drawback experienced by the teacher-researchers was that it was so comprehensive as to be overwhelming. The teachers recommend that others begin by evaluating their current situation and procedures and selecting a few elements of the action plan that offer students a broader range of relevant choices. With choice comes ownership, and with ownership comes responsibility for producing quality work.

In conclusion, the writing sample data showed a measurable increase in the ability of the targeted students to communicate effectively in writing. What the data does not show is how much of this increase might be due to natural maturation and how much might be a direct result of the intervention plan. It would take an extremely well-designed experimental research project, including a control group, to differentiate between these two factors. This is neither ethical nor possible given the setting.

The researchers are confident, based on their combined teaching experience of over 51 years, that the intervention plan played a major role in the reported results. Even when attributing part of the improvement to natural maturation, other research would support this conclusion. Research shows effect size alone is not the only consideration when evaluating and choosing a plan of intervention.

When the intervention effects the majority of the targeted population, even a small change can result in large gains. This is particularly true when the intervention promotes positive attitudes and values (Joyce, Showers, 1988, pg. 30-31). Such is the situation described in this action research report. Writing samples, anecdotal records and student interviews and reflections indisputably proved the targeted kindergarten through 2nd-grade students produced effective writing pieces. It is projected that further development is imminent because the students perceive themselves as successful writers and view that as a meaningful, valuable and enjoyable thing to be.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Student Writing Interview

1. What is writing?

2. Who do you see writing?

3. What is writing for? Why do people write?

4. Do you write?

5. What kinds of things do you write?

6. How do you feel about writing?

7. Describe what kind of writer you think you are.

8. What would you like to be able to write? What do you hope to learn about writing this year?

Appendix B

WRITING SAMPLE ONE

LESSON PLAN

Supplies:

Three types of paper are placed side-by-side in a location which is easily accessible to students. The types of paper to be used are plain drawing paper, partially lined primary story paper and full lined primary paper.

Time Line:

Writing samples one and two are to be collected within the first two weeks of the study and before the action research interventions begin.

Students are to be given ample time in which to complete the sample. They should not feel rushed by time constraints. (Approximately 30 minutes)

Directions:

The teacher chooses a unit-related topic which the students have been studying in class. Students are directed to tell and/or show , on paper, what they know about the topic. Directions are to be brief and limited with no use of leading words such as "draw" or "write".

Students are told to choose one of the three varieties of paper supplied according to which they feel will work best for them. It is suggested that no more than four or five students collect their choice of paper at a time, in order to prevent crowding and avoid the influence of accessibility in triggering paper choices.

The teachers role at this time is that of researcher and, therefore she should avoid assisting individuals or commenting on their work. Rather, she should circulate around the room while observing interactions among students and their approach to the task, and recording these observations in anecdotal form. Finished papers are placed in a designated place (the teacher will be busy observing

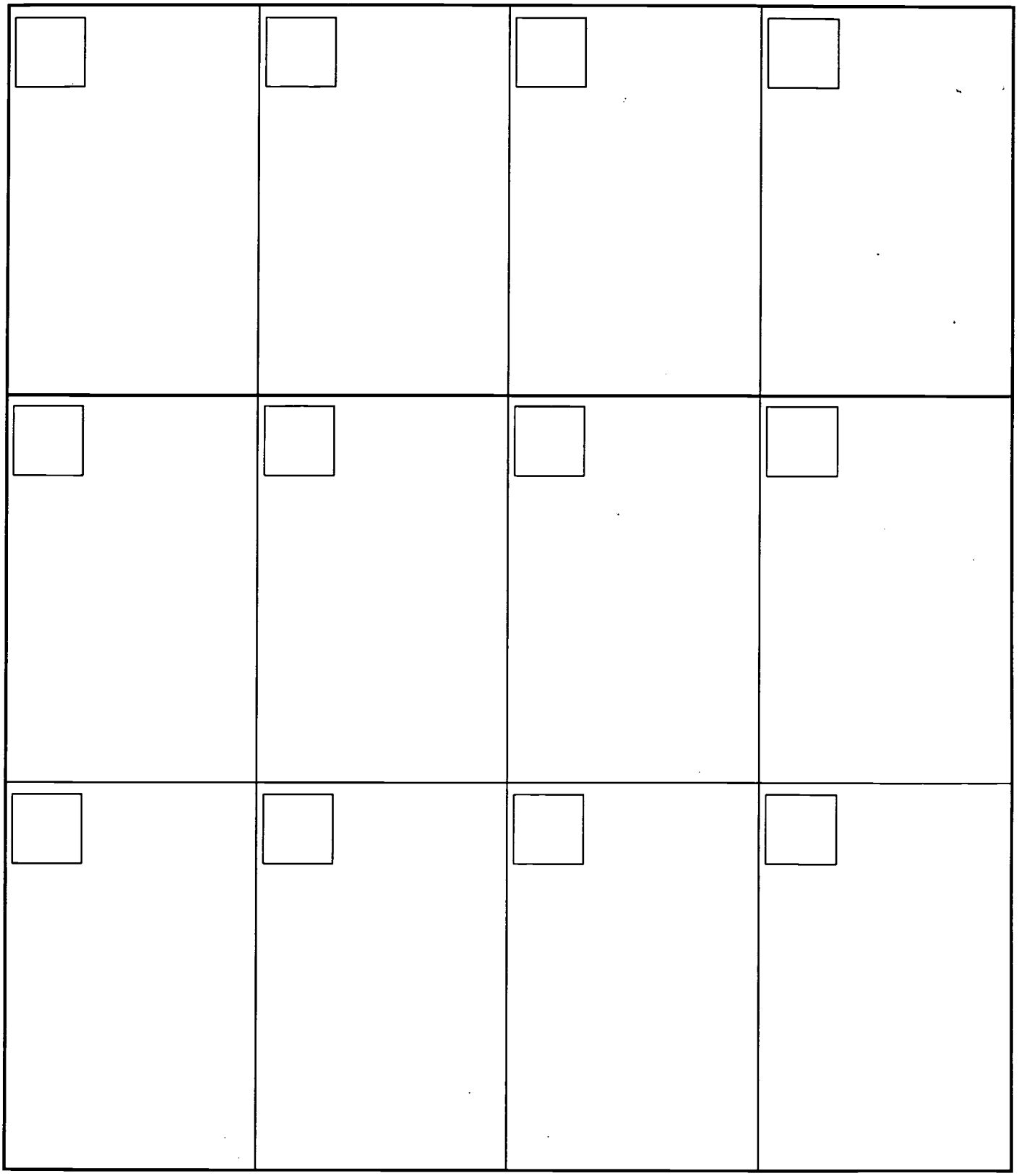
students at this time). Dictation, when appropriate, is taken after the students have completed their tasks.

Recording Findings:

The writing samples are analyzed through the use of a teacher team-devised rubric. Findings are recorded in the action research document.

Appendix C

Anecdotal Record Form



Appendix D

CHECKLIST

AFFECTIVE:		SOCIAL INTERACTION:		ORGANIZATION/ STRATEGIES:	
Reluctant; avoids writing		Attentive listener		Uses materials appropriately	
Anxious, but willing to attempt writing		Participates during sharing time		Organizes workspace, materials	
Able to stay focused		Works cooperatively with others		Effectively uses pictures to formulate, recall...thought/plot	
Enthusiastic and comfortable		Willing to assist others		Uses writing aids in the classroom	
Confident		Offers constructive feedback to others		Appropriately seeks specific assistance	
Willing to rethink, revise		Accepts constructive feedback			
Experiments and takes risks					

KEY:

H.S......Heavily Supported
G......Guided
P.S......Peer Supported
I......Independent

COMMENTS:

Appendix E

Writing Rubric

Genre: narrative..... expository..... persuasive..... poetry

Picture Writers/Text Through Dictation.....Transition Stage.....Content/Story Construction Rubrics.....

Pictures unrelated to topic	Pictures related to topic	Pictures prompt additional information on topic	Pictures used to organize information or suggest a storyline			Text is unclear; illustrat. aids in clarifying the meaning of the text	Illustrations some-what support/ match text	Illustrations support/ match text	Illustrations enrich text
				Pictures accompanied by labeling, phrases or unconvent. text		Simple sentences repeated sentence pattern	Beginning more developed than the end and/or missing elements of sequence	Well-developed beginning, middle, and end with logical sequence	Uses sufficient details to enhance the elements of the genre'
					Includes information relevant to topic/main idea	Stays on topic	Supports topic/main idea with details	All ideas in paragraph are related	Clear focus throughout
					Predictable word choice	Experiments with word choices	Emerging use of imagery	Frequent use of imagery	Effective use of imagery throughout
							Attempts dialogue, speaker unclear	Uses dialogue, speaker is inconsistent.	Uses dialogue effectively, speaker is

Appendix E

Writing Rubric

Mechanics/Conventions Rubrics of Student-Generated Text.....

	Proper orientation and use of paper is emerging	Proper orientation and use of paper is evident; printing is legible	Proper orientation and use of paper is evident; printing is legible	Proper orientation and use of paper is evident; printing is legible
		Attempts to use appropriate capitals and punctuation	Frequently uses appropriate capitals and punctuation	Consistently uses appropriate capitals and punctuation
Single/sequential drawing(s)	Labeling or phrases	Simple sentence structure, some fragmented/run-on sentences	Simple and complex sentence structure, some fragmented/run-on sentences	Varied sentence structures, few fragmented/run-on sentences
			Maintains point of view	Maintains point of view
Child reads back something unrelated to letters	Majority of words unrecognizable to teacher; student may read back when writing, but not at a later time	Some words recognizable to teacher; child may read most of it back at a later time	Most words are recognizable to teacher	Passage readable as a whole by teacher and others

Appendix F

GLOSSARY

Author Study:

A method of introducing various styles of writing and real-life examples of writing mechanics by exposing children to many works of the same author. The utilization of author studies allows students to discover patterns inherent in the work of various authors and illustrators while providing an authentic model of the writing process as well as the correct use of writing mechanics. Author studies frequently inspire children to attempt to incorporate some aspects of the published author's style in their own works, often culminating in a personally written letter to the featured author.

Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.):

A regularly scheduled time set aside for the sole purpose of reading self-selected material, usually with a partner. After each child has read to his/her partner, the group debriefs by discussing interesting things they have noted in their books or by reflecting on interactions within their partnerships.

Drop Everything and Write (D.E.A.W.):

A regularly scheduled block of time (ranging from 45 to 60 minutes) set aside for writing, sometimes with a partner. Topics may be teacher-directed or self-generated; finished products may be shared with the group following a conference with the teacher. If the child wishes to publish his/her product, the work must be discussed with peers in a P.Q.S. conference and edited into a final draft form.

Mailbox Activity:

An organized, continuing system of communication activities originating in the kindergarten post office play area. Children are encouraged to interact by writing notes, cards and letters to each other. After checking a classroom

"directory" that matches individual pictures with assigned numbers, the child addresses his/her mail and deposits it in the corresponding mailbox.

Meet the Author:

An opportunity for students to meet and interact personally with a commercially published author. This forum allows children to hear first-hand, the process and steps involved in the successful completion of a piece of writing. When possible, the activity is organized in such a fashion as to involve the students in the production of a piece of writing in partnership with the visiting author.

Praise-Question-Suggestion (P.Q.S.) Conference:

A structured method of sharing student work which allows the student author to lead the discussion. After reading to the group, the student author begins the discussion by asking for "praise", usually from three to five fellow students. This allows the student author to begin self-examination on a pleasant note, often elevating his/her confidence. Students offering praise must state a specific reason for what they liked. The student author can then ask for one to two questions about his/her work and one to two suggestions. These suggestions may spark revision of the current piece of work, guide a future writing effort, or simply help the student author to reflect upon his/her own writing process.

Rubric:

A tool of assessment which clearly delineates expectations for final performance of a task. Frequently arranged in a matrix, possible outcomes are sequenced in an ascending hierarchy, with minimum expectations set forth on one end and maximum expectations set forth on the opposite end.

Stages of the Writing Process:

Steps considered necessary to the successful completion of a piece of writing. It is important to remember that the teacher-researchers involved in this project

look upon these steps as recursive and over-lapping rather than linear. The steps emphasized for this project are: pre-writing, drafting, revising, proofreading/editing and sharing/publishing.

Student-Led Literacy Conferences:

Conferences arranged for the purpose of having students, parents and teachers reflect on a student's growth and development as a writer. Students select two pieces of writing to share with their parents and teachers, who in turn offer feedback from their own perspective. Writing goals are set by the student and all participants work together to formulate a plan for supporting work toward the desired goal.

Young Authors' Conference:

A state-wide organized competition that asks students to write and submit their best writing piece to be judged by local and possibly state officials. The rules state that submitted pieces must be authored by only one person and that written samples will be judged for originality, creativity, student voice, logical sequence and clarity of purpose.

Appendix G

Plans for Sharing

Author:_____
Title:_____
Date:_____

I would like to share this by:

___ storytelling
___ narrated skit
___ reading aloud
___ publishing

I have decided not to share my work at this time because

_____
_____
_____
_____

****

REFLECTIONS OF THE AUTHOR

Other people may enjoy reading my book because

_____
_____

Some things I've learned about my writing are

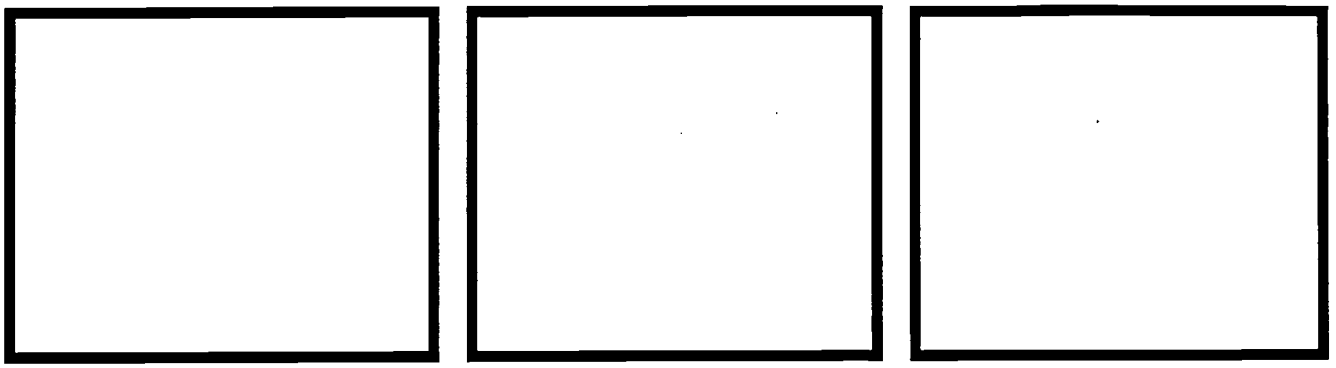
_____
_____

As the author of this book I felt_____
because_____
_____

Appendix H

PUBLISHING PROCESS

My work has a clear and logical :



beginning middle end

I have shared this work in a P.Q.S. conference with

_____

After conferencing with my peers and a teacher I think I need to

_____

_____

My peer editor was _____. Now I am ready to have my work edited with a teacher.

This work is ready for publishing.

_____
author's signature

_____
teacher's signature

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